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# *Australian* Garden

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## Guest Editorial

by JENNIFER PHIPPS

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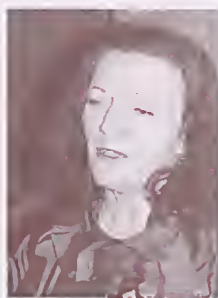
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### FRONT COVER

A watercolour drawing of 'The Pear-shaped Quince' made for the Horticultural Society in 1816 by William Hooker (1779-1832).



Who can forget the 1996 Australian Contemporary Art Fair and Christopher Langton's planting of gigantic sunflowers, wired and motorised, arrayed in the middle of Melbourne's Exhibition Building? This is only one example of plant and garden imagery in recent Australian art.

The history of Australia's artists' images of flowers, plants and gardens is long and illustrious. It begins with Aboriginal paintings in ancient rock art sites in Central Australia which depict plants and which are echoed in the bark paintings of plants like the wild yam in Arnhem Land, images which continue as totemic sign and symbol of country to the present. The exquisite botanical record from Ferdinand Bauer's visit with Matthew Flinders at the beginning of the 19th century may be compared with the late 20th century botanical art of the equally intuitive and gifted Margaret Stones. A similar, more general pairing may be made about homestead and garden paintings which have underlying meanings derived from notions of spiritual renewal together with claims to the right to impose European interpretations on the view. This is seen in artists like John Glover and Eugen von Guerard. The admittedly benign 20th century comparison is with artists like Grace Cossington Smith and her paintings of outer suburban gardens and flowers and the sublime and lyrical 1990s large single flower paintings and prints by Tim Macquire.

In Australian art of the last ten years, nature has become a source for computer generated images. Jon McCormack wrote of his interactive videodisc installation, *Turbulence*, 1994, which projects gorgeous manipulated organic and vegetal three dimensional forms: 'I see and appreciate nature in a fundamentally different way than before'. The massive and off beat scale of some recent flower images shows that more questions than those about nature preoccupy some artists. Is there a future for the environment? Can flowers, conventional emblems of goodness, healthful occupation or love and passion, be rendered neutral so they become simply a means to investigate the nature of abstraction? Christopher Langton's hectic, cartoon-like sunflowers re-visit the Aesthetic Movement and may be paired with Robyn Stacey's banner of hibiscus and other flowers shown last January during the Sydney Festival. Of immense dimensions and stretched above Circular Quay its glamour and South Seas ambience on a super scale corresponds to the somehow sinister sunflowers, ranked indoors, over-reaching visitors and slowly writhing. In both installations, there is a hint of late 20th century Gothic visitation from another dimension.

On the other hand, the elegiac forest for the Eora people (the original inhabitants of Sydney), titled *The edge of the trees*, has been described as a shrine. An installation of wooden poles and iron beans by Fiona Foley and Janet Lawrence, it was commissioned for the plaza of the Museum of Sydney.

Fragmentary materials and bits of images from the traditional backyard have also entered the artist's studios. Fiona Hall, who has exhibited photographic series on gardens, made jewel-like sculpture from sardine tins for an exhibition titled *Garden of earthly delights* which toured Australian state galleries in 1994-95. The classical source for the imagery and its playful and refined realisation contrasts physically with the installation sculptures of Rosalie Gascoigne, who assembles floor and wall sculptures which evoke clouds and waves on an inland sea, all made from discards. Rosalie Gascoigne's art shares with that of Fiona Hall the reminder that gleaming new sardine tins or bits picked up from roadside and tip, like fencing wire, old corrugated roofing iron and boards with worn lino affixed, instantly evoke memories of the utility role of the traditional Australian backyard. At their best, Hall and Gascoigne transform their recycled material into magical objects which at the same time remain within their source, the traditional garden and the backyard.

Jennifer Phipps is Curator of Australian Art, 1900-1970, National Gallery of Victoria. She is presently curating an exhibition, *I had a dream: Australian art in the 1960s*. Jennifer's book, now out of print, is titled *Artist's Gardens - Flowers and gardens in Australian art*.



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# Heaven of blossoms

the garden of Australian photographer  
Harold Cazneaux



Art historian **Helen Ennis** offers a rare glimpse through the lens into Ambleside, Harold Cazneaux's garden surrounding his home and studio in Roseville, which, in the 1920s, was a rural suburb of Sydney. Not only did Cazneaux design and lay out his spacious garden, but used it as a backdrop for many of his portraits.

*Looking up central path of orchard, towards original rockery and bushland at rear of block.  
Harold junior on scooter in foreground. 1924.*



*'those who are responsive to the strange beauty and fascination of Australian trees have reason to be grateful to Cazneaux'*



*Looking west from side garden across front garden; hedge on left, camphor laurel in centre distance. 1930's.*

Harold Cazneaux's photographs of the Australian landscape attracted great praise during his lifetime. The painter Arthur Streeton described him 'as a landscape man' of the first order, one with 'a great gift'. But it was Cazneaux's photographic studies of trees that were specially admired. In the foreword to the Ure Smith miniature *Australian Treescapes*, published in 1950, the editors wrote that all 'those who are responsive to the strange beauty and fascination of Australian trees have reason to be grateful to Cazneaux'. Throughout his life, it was noted, Cazneaux 'made a special study of native trees'. The gum tree that is the subject of 'The Spirit of Endurance', one of his most famous images taken in the Flinders Ranges in 1937, is now known as 'The Cazneaux tree'. It bears a plaque in tribute to him.

There is, however, another little known dimension to Cazneaux's interest in the landscape and trees – his own garden. Developed over many years at Roseville, on Sydney's North Shore, it is unfortunately no longer in existence.

Cazneaux's twin loves of the landscape and of Australian trees stemmed from his boyhood years spent at Scott Creek in South Australia. There he was surrounded by bush and birds which provided rich source material for sketches he made during his teenage years. Once he and his family moved to Adelaide, Cazneaux's interaction with the natural world was limited to photographic forays. According to family lore, Cazneaux was most frustrated by his retouching work at Hammer's photographic studio when he heard the sound of birds (my thanks to his daughter Joan Smith for this charming story). In 1904 he settled in Sydney, joining Freeman and Co; the following year he married Winifred (née

Hodge). The young couple lived in North Sydney where in 1908 the first of six children were born (Rainbow, Jean, Beryl, Carmen, Joan and son Harold).



*Looking east across driveway in original block to front of side garden. 1930's*





*Bougainvillea and Grapevine massed on back wall of studio, showing side gate taken from back lawn. 1930s. Facing page: Rockery with waterfall in bushland at rear of original block. Built in late 1920s.*

In 1914 Cazneaux won a photographic competition which proved fortuitous. With the generous first prize of one hundred pounds he was able to choose an alternative to city living, making a deposit on a house at Dudley Avenue in Roseville. The house, built just a year or two previously, had belonged to artist and art dealer Gayfield Shaw. Cazneaux's daughters have vivid memories of the highly contemporary interior decoration of the lounge room which was half-pannelled. The panels were covered in hessian featuring hand-stencilled gum leaves (the hessian was later removed and the panels painted blue).

It was here at Ambleside that Cazneaux was able to unite his professional and personal lives. He chose to work at home, establishing a studio at the side of the house where clients could come for appointments. Equally important was the garden which Cazneaux lovingly created over the years. It provided an adjunct to his photography, a beautiful site for portraits, child studies and wedding photographs. It was, however, also a source of great personal pleasure for Cazneaux and, by all accounts, his family as well.



*Looking from right hand side of orchard, towards bush at back of original block. 1930s.*

Through their reminiscences, Jean Blundell and Joan Smith, two of Cazneaux's five daughters, have made it possible to reconstruct a picture of the garden. Both have emphasised its internal variety: the front, side and back gardens all had quite distinctive characters. Also of great importance for the overall effect was the lack of rigidity, Cazneaux's garden was not 'spick and span' but natural and pleasant.









*Flagged courtyard of studio garden, looking to side block. Turpentine trees right, Joan (l) and Beryl (r). 1930s.*

Cazneaux's garden developed in different phases. When the house was purchased it was on a narrow, long block, 80ft wide and 300ft deep. It was to the front garden that Cazneaux initially directed his attention, planting a privet hedge across the front of the block with access from a corner gate; inside a camphor laurel stood. Blue hydrangeas were massed against the front of the house and verandah. Across the lawn paths were laid which later in the 1920s were replaced with irregular stepping stones.

Along the back of the house ran a pergola draped with a wisteria vine. In springtime, grand-daughter Sally Garrett recalls, it was a sea of mauve running in all directions. In the back garden was lawn, then an extensive orchard which included nectarine, peach, plum, pear, apple, orange and lemon trees and a plumcot (cross between a plum and an apricot). Joan Smith has recalled that the orchard created 'a heaven of blossoms' in spring, plentiful fruit in autumn that was made into jam for the family by Winifred Cazneaux, and a delightful tracery of tree branches in winter. Beyond the orchard was natural bush where a rockery was later built with the help of a young stone mason, Arthur Carden.

The second main phase of garden building came in the mid 1920s after the acquisition of an adjacent block on the side of the house where the studio was situated; hence the creation of the 'side garden' as the family referred to it. Here flower beds closest to the house were divided by wandering stone paths. One of the paths had urns placed at either end, framing the views. The side garden flowed into natural bushland as at the back where Cazneaux further developed the rockery, his youngest daughter Joan watching as the rocks were excavated and running water laid.

The Cazneaux family helped in the garden, trimming the hedge, planting the vegetables, mowing the lawns. In the 1930s when business was quiet, Beryl and Joan would often work in the garden instead of the studio.



Cazneaux's garden made much of the mix of exotics and natives. Exotics included hydrangeas, fuschias, columbines, foxgloves, camellias, irises and later, azaleas and gardenias. The garden was enriched by the addition of plants and cuttings given to Cazneaux by many of the people whose homes and gardens he photographed (often for the fashionable *Home* magazine). While Cazneaux was undoubtedly inspired by other gardens he visited, his garden designs, in the estimation of his family, were very much his own. They were in fact another form of creative expression.

Following Harold Cazneaux's death in 1953 the block next door was sold, later the back, leaving no trace of what one family member has described as 'paradise'.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My special thanks to Cazneaux's daughters Joan Smith and Jean Blundell and grand-daughter Sally Garrett for their reminiscences, assistance in the writing of this essay, and for permission to use photographs reproduced on these pages.

Joan Smith drew a wonderful plan of the garden and combed the family albums for these photographs by her father.

Helen Ennis joined the National Gallery of Australia in 1981 and was Curator of Photography from 1985-1992. She worked as a freelance curator and writer from 1992-1996 and now lectures in art theory at the Australian National University, Canberra School of Art. Her publications include introductions to *Harold Cazneaux: The quiet observer* and to *Olive Cotton Photographer*, both published by the National Library of Australia.



*Turpentine trees  
amongst flagging  
in side garden from  
studio courtyard  
looking east. 1930s.*



# ART IN THE GARDEN

Art in the garden or the garden as art?

**Judith Baskin** explores the issues...



**I**t seems a little premature to talk of art in the garden before talking about the garden as art. Art in the garden is only part of the story. The choice of sculpture to put in a garden should only occur when the garden demands a piece to go in a particular place and it should be fit for its purpose.

*Out of a background of trees emerges the rhythmical flow of grace and line in the form of the little dancer. Figure and setting should be at one, and the composition united in the perceptions and feelings that enrich and satisfy the beholder.*

— Edna Walling, 1946

The garden comes first and so I want to talk about the art of the garden. Not all gardening is art. Where does gardening become an art? It is in the intention. It is looking at the end, not just the process.

A garden may be created for purely productive purposes. The earliest gardens in Australia were productive, not to mention subsistence, gardens as the settlements of Sydney and Hobart struggled to feed themselves.

The garden may be a place for flowers. Many garden books talk about the beauty of plants and many people have a garden



for the sake of the plants. This is the plantsman's garden. The prime consideration is a bed for a particular plant. The plantsman's garden is not a lesser garden, simply different. The value is in the individual plant, its beauty and abounding health.

Mrs Rolf Boldrewood in her book *The Flower Garden in Australia* wrote 'My chief enjoyment, has ever been in the care of my garden. In my various homes I have always succeeded in surrounding myself with flowers. They have been what "a pleasant look, a cheerful tone, an answer mild and kind" would be to others. Whatever the soil or climate, nearly everything in my garden has been planted with my own hands, and in consequence, every flower, I may say nearly everything in my garden, has been specially known and familiar, therefore more highly valued.'

Gardens may be for religious purposes. We believe that the first gardens in Mesopotamia reflected the perceived world order, the division of the world into four parts. And it formed the starting point for the stories of the Old Testament. George Seddon discussed some of this in a previous issue of *Australian Garden History*. To the Trobriant Islanders their gardens and their gods are the religion of their life. Their ethics and life were intimately bound together in their gardens until Europeans arrived to try to change their way of life.

A development this century has been the garden as an ecological unit where plants are grouped according to their origins and requirements. Influences may be conscious or unconscious and many of the influences are historical. They may be the practical or the religious mentioned above or they may be the precedents of art or of remembered landscapes. The precedents of history enrich our perceptions and our sources of inspiration.

The tools of the artist are the spade, the bobcat or the earthmover to shape the earth; the fork, the hoe and the rake to till it; the shears, the secateurs, saws and lawn mower to shape and control the plants. The skills of the landscape architect, the plantsman and the artist merge in planning and managing the dimensions, the scale, the shape and the perspectives, the textures, the perfumes, the colours; above all the ability to dream.

Charles Maddox-Brown, in writing about the garden he created in Sydney in the 1960s, wrote, 'A garden is a means of escape from man's grey life into God's green world. It represents the fulfilment of a dream scaled down to the size of one's pocket and the scope of one's creative horizon.'

In the designed garden, these elements come together as influences whether conscious or subconscious. The ground of the wonderful St Thomas Aquinas at Charnwood in the ACT (designed by Giurgola the architect of the new Parliament House) has very conscious links with the past. Its enclosed garden with the Stations of the Cross around the walls is a direct descendant of the gardens of the monasteries, churches and cathedrals of medieval times in Europe. Its mystic forest of Tasmanian timbers standing before the main entrance relates to our earliest links with forests as well as to the Alhambra. The

formal garden set on the House of Representatives side of the new Parliament House, amongst the Australian bush gardens which otherwise surround the building, owes its design to the Moghul gardens of India and Pakistan.

This is not to say that the garden planned initially as a place for particular plants, as an ecological garden or as a productive garden, may not become a work of art, but, as with the other arts, the effect is more likely to result from conscious effort.



*The amateur landscape gardener who considers his planting effects from the ecological point of view, that is the study of the natural association of plants, will make better landscape pictures... this is the reason why palms look so ridiculous in association with birches - to mention but one frequently seen example.*

— Edna Walling, 1948

While the earliest gardens in Australia were for food, very quickly the symmetry of design and organising the earth marched hand in hand with the effort to produce food. In the early gardens of the new colonists, decorative plants were added immediately. The geranium in particular had travelled on the First Fleet and was soon flourishing in the new environment.

It is after the garden has been created that art in the garden finds its place. The beautiful and mysterious garden of the Australian National Gallery in Canberra was designed as a place for sculpture. It has its formal areas where the Rodin sculptures are seen against the huge walls of the Gallery and the paved areas. It has bush where one comes across Aboriginal sculpture. It has its mysterious misted areas where a boat lies on the edge of the water. Because it is a garden, it has its moments of comic relief provided by the people. A statuesque purple togaed figure surges across the paved cafe area; a former Prime Minister taking part in a public relations event. The unexpected happens in gardens as well as art.

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Judy Baskin is a librarian turned garden writer and heritage consultant. After many years at the National Library of Australia, she furthered a lifetime interest by studying landscape architecture. In 1995 she co-authored a heritage study of significant gardens in the ACT under a grant from the ACT Heritage Council and in 1996 co-authored a pictorial history of private gardening in Australia for the National Library of Australia, *Australia's Timeless Gardens*.



# THE EDUCATION OF A GARDENER

by SUE FORGE



There I was during the Easter break, relaxing, enjoying a beautiful glass of wine as the sun drifted down behind the old Mulberry. I sat contemplating my efforts in the garden during the day, feeling satisfied that I had been productive and creative. My reverie was interrupted by a call requesting a contribution to this column pronto!

So here I am wondering how I can convey my passion for gardening. My childhood was spent during the sixties in Bendigo in central Victoria. Gardening was not something that was regarded by my family as an art form, or a wonderful source of relaxation and endless pleasure. However, my mother did garden and although it was classed as just another of the household chores I think it was her favourite.

In time, I bought a house in North Carlton. It had been owned by an Italian family and like so many others consisted of little more than a few cacti and white pebbles. This was the beginning for me. All of you know that wonderful

feeling when an area is transformed from being very dull to being something alive and beautiful, changing with the seasons (and over time). And so I caught the bug.

Warwick Forge then came into my life and new worlds

opened up. We married at Dreamthorpe, a most beautiful garden at Macedon then owned by Penny and Phillip Dunn. Over time, I came to meet some great gardeners – George Seddon, Friedl Gardener, Penny Dunn, Ruth Tindale and others.

And so I gained endless inspiration and knowledge from wonderful gardeners but there was also another wonderful source – gardening books. Many years ago, Warwick gave me Gwen Fagan's *Roses at the Cape of Good Hope* – my first introduction to heritage roses. Gwen Fagan writes lovingly of old roses at the Cape – she is deeply involved with the places and people associated with them. Originally planned as a small brochure for visitors to Boschendal, where she had established a thriving



heritage rose garden from her collection, the book gradually grew to become a comprehensive history of old roses at the Cape. It is surely the most beautiful rose book I have ever possessed with some 200 full scale photographs taken by the author's husband.

These days I often reflect how lucky I am to be the custodian of a wonderful old Victorian villa in Hawthorn. I have spent the last five years planning, toiling, planting, moving and watching the garden develop and flourish through the seasons. Then of course the icing on the cake is to work each day surrounded by many of the best gardening books from around the world. Warwick is a book wholesaler and I run a gardening book mail-order business known as The Green Book Company.

Language of Botany'. Then there is the story of the 'Plants from the New World' and thence to the various plant families. For anyone like me anxious to learn, I find no one has ever written with such clarity and insight.

In recent times I have been searching out other writers more directly relevant to our climate and lifestyle. Our hot summer in Melbourne this year has been a shock for many of us, particularly now that we are charged for water by volume!

I had known of Trevor Nottle from his *Growing Old Fashioned Roses* and *Old Fashioned Gardens* but reading his new *Gardens of the Sun* was altogether different. He states plainly that much of what occurs at Hidcote and Sissinghurst will be of very little relevance to us and is he much happier

## 'The wonderful thing about gardening is that it seems to draw out the finer instincts in people'

I find myself drawn to the books about real people and real gardens. About the frustrations, discoveries and triumphs. A pair of books that spring to mind are Susan Irvine's *Garden of 1,000 Roses* and *A Hillside of Roses*. We empathise with her task of constructing two very different gardens. In *Garden of 1,000 Roses* particularly, she describes her discovery of a place and passion that would become her life's work. The test of a good book I think is when you come to the end feeling disappointed that it is the end. I felt this with both of these books. These two books have recently been re-released in a single volume.

Another writer who recorded her garden creation was Margery Fish in *We Made a Garden* which has been re-published by Timber Press. It tells the story of the creation of a cottage garden from a wilderness. The author and her husband Walter have very singular views but there is useful advice on every page. She must have been a sight with secateurs, the regular use of which she strongly commends. 'Iris stylosa needs drastic grooming...'

It is wonderful to see the classics being re-published and enthused about. I am currently enjoying Gertrude Jekyll's *Colour in the Flower Garden* and have been dipping in and out of William Robinson's *The English Flower Garden*.

Having no horticultural qualifications of any kind I was thrilled to pick up the new *Hugh Johnson's Gardening Companion* which is an extensively revised version of his *The Principles of Gardening*. So many fresh perspectives for me like 'How to Look at a Plant', 'How plants Work' and 'The

describing the relevance of Spain and India, native plants (often so difficult to cultivate), agapanthus and a host of other drought tolerant plants. A riot of cactus on the front cover and on the rear a clipped evergreen garden surmounted by a castle in Haute-Provence, convey the essence of the book.

Another similar book to make a deep impression upon me has been Heide Gildermeister's *Mediterranean Gardening* in which she explains the conversion over 20 years of a bleak maquis landscape at Mallorca to a thriving four hectare garden, boasting a remarkable range of drought tolerant plants and waterwise gardening techniques so fundamental to us here.

Involvement with gardening books has also brought the intense pleasure of meeting authors. George Seddon has been helpful in many ways and particularly with the creation of our Mediterranean garden room. Trevor Nottle stayed with us recently and as he sat thoughtfully ensconced on our verandah eating porridge with Warwick, I wondered apprehensively what he might think of our rear cottage style garden. I need not have feared – Trevor can only be thoughtful and helpful and my apprehension was quite unfounded. The wonderful thing about gardening is that it seems to draw out the finer instincts in people.

Sue Forge lives with her husband and two girls in a heritage listed building in Hawthorn, Melbourne. This was originally the German Consul's residence and it is believed that Baron von Mueller may have made some contribution to the original garden. Sue runs a mail order garden book business, *The Green Book Company*.

### SUE FORGE'S READING LIST

.(Confined to books currently available and in print.)

- *The Complete Book of Bulbs* by Mathew Swindells
- *Dramatic Effects with Architectural Plants* by Noel Kingsbury
- *The Education of a Gardener* by Russell Page
- *Gardens of California* by Nancy Power
- *The Gardener's Book of Colour* by Andrew Lawson
- *The Garden Sourcebook* by Caroline Boisset
- *The Green Tapestry* by Beth Chatto
- *Peter Beales Roses* by Peter Beales
- *Royal Horticultural Society A-Z of Plants & Flowers* (just released)
- *Australia's Timeless Gardens* by Baskin and Dixon



# The Quince

CYDONIA OBLONGA

Stuart Read extols the virtue of one of our earliest imported trees, the quince.

This vastly under-rated tree has been called 'the truffle of the orchard'...

*Women with child that eat quinces will bear wise children*  
– Dodoens, A Nieuwe Herball or Histoire of Plants,  
transl. by H. Lytes, 1578



Jewish tradition has it that the quince is the oldest of fruits and grew in the garden of Eden. It originated in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, where it can still be found growing wild. Its association with temptation may well have derived from its ancient dedication to the goddess Venus. Many varieties were grown from ancient times in the Mediterranean area. Quinces were known to have been planted in parks to the north of King Sargon's Nineveh around 710BC for example. The quince was later very popularly used in monastery gardens, particularly in Italy and southern France, but also in England. Such uses included planting in rows as a 'noble tree' and as hedging around middle sized gardens or orchards.

The Villa Lante at Bagnaia in the mid-sixteenth century sported orchards/*boschetti* of quinces and pomegranates,

peaches and figs, alternating with woods of olive and holm oaks. Duke Cosimo d'Medici grew dwarf fruit trees grafted onto quince root stocks in an orchard of the Boboli gardens in the sixteenth century. Dwarf fruit trees, low hedges and espaliered fruit trees against trellis, including quinces, became increasingly popular in the late sixteenth century in Italy, and later in France, under Le Notre.

Plantsman John Tradescant the elder travelled from England to the Low Countries between 1610 and 1615, where he obtained quinces and brought them back to England for the gardens at Hatfield, then still in construction.

By the seventeenth century, Gerard described the quince in England as 'growing in gardens and orchards' and planted 'often times in hedges and Fences belonging to Gardens and Vineyards'. At around the same time, Kasim, a contemporary of the Moghul Emperor Babul, wrote of the



design of Islamic *charbarbagh* gardens, including such features as pavilions, geometric layout and four central plots planted with single fruit species such as the quince. Persian miniature paintings of that period also depict quince trees growing in their gardens.

For almost two hundred years after the first American colonies were established, any recorded nurserymen were fruit growers, selling or exchanging named varieties originally imported from Europe. Nurseryman Henry Wolcott was selling quinces in 1648, among other named varieties of fruits.

Quince trees appear in the list of plants Sir Joseph Banks collected at the Cape of Good Hope in 1787, on his journey to become Governor Phillip's adviser on the introduction of economic plants to the colony of New South Wales. They also appear in the 1788 list of plants landed in Australia, along with oranges, lemons, figs, apples and pears. These plants, along with others from Rio de Janeiro, were placed in land set aside for 'farm and garden' to the east of the main settlement of Sydney, inland from what is now termed 'Farm Cove'. Their success was vital to the survival of the colony.

While it may be rare to find specific references to quinces, as opposed to other types of fruit trees, it seems likely that from the first days of Western settlement there have always been quinces in Australian kitchen gardens, orchards and hedgerows. Early cottage gardens commonly had areas of ornamental planting and separate areas of utilitarian planting, including vegetables and fruits. Some examples had ornamental gardens being separated from kitchen gardens and a general utilitarian area by a fence or low hedge, commonly of quince, sweet briar, box, olive, Cape Broom or *Acacia armata*. Thomas Shepherd, the first commercial nurseryman in Sydney, in his 1835 book of lectures on Australian horticulture, listed quinces among the fruit trees grown in New South Wales at the time. Due to their habit of suckering and their longevity, quince trees are often one of the few survivors of old gardens and orchards, often spreading and outliving the generations of human inhabitants.

Ornamental use of the quince is also known in Australian gardens. Edna Walling's charming 1930s garden, Boortkoi, at Hexham in Victoria, has a formal terrace by the house, and over a low stone wall a natural garden falls away down a bank to a river, with drifts of flowering trees such as quinces and cherry plums, long grass and bulbs.

Gertrude Jekyll, Vita Sackville-West and Russell Page all extolled the quince as a beautiful specimen tree, lamenting its lack of popularity in England over the last century.

Modern plantsman, Hugh Johnson, describes the fruit as 'the truffle of the orchard' and notes 'it is eccentric to grow quinces today'. They were reputedly more popular in the days before refrigerators, as the fruit would last well into winter.

The quince tree is named *Cydonia oblonga* or *C. vulgaris*, after the Cretan town of Cydon where it was known to grow. It is a small deciduous tree, slowly reaching 4-6 metres at the tallest. It is monotypic, or the only member of its genus, and is in the Rose family, *Rosaceae*, along with cherries, plums,

peaches, apples and pears. There are two species in cultivation, of which *C. oblonga* is the superior. Gertrude Jekyll distinguished between the more tender 'Old English' (Hillier's nursery term it the 'Portuguese') quince which is smaller, has a graceful arching habit in winter, is the best for flowers and has softly downy or smooth skinned rounder fruit, and the 'other kind', which is rather larger and more rigid in habit, more coarse and with woolly more oblong fruit.

The flowering quinces or japonica apples, now named *Chaenomeles japonica*, were at one time named *Cydonia japonica* or *C. maulei*, leading to some confusion. These too were (and remain) popular garden plants, both for flower and fruit, which, like the larger true quince, is fragrant and cooks well into jellies, jam or paste.

Quince trees are exceptionally beautiful with large, golden, pear-like fruit in autumn and broad-leaved handsome foliage. In spring the unfolding leaves are silvery with a fine thick down; the large single, pink and white flowers are delicate, fragrant and exquisite. The fruit ripens to a rich gold, and 'carries the fragrance of a rose garden in its heart, mixed with the voluptuous scent of ripe pears'. Another writer

notes 'the haunting lemony fragrance hangs about the tree and fills the kitchen'. In autumn, along with the fruit, the leaves turn rich golden tones.

The fruit can be eaten raw, but tends to astringency, and is better once cooked. On stewing the grainy flesh turns a brilliant scarlet or pink, and with the addition of honey or sugar, becomes something else

indeed. Straining and boiling with sugar produces jelly and eventually paste.

Interestingly, the word marmalade comes from the Portuguese word *marmelada*, meaning quince jam, and from *marmelo* for quince. Quince jelly in granular pinky-amber slabs is a common Portuguese confection still. Quinces are used in cooked fruit dishes, pies and preserves such as quince jelly and quince paste, a rich accompaniment to cheese and port. Quinces are reputed to bring a 'mysterious savour that makes an apple pie come alive as no apple can – except perhaps an old fashioned russet'.

Quinces are propagated from seed or cuttings, and varieties are grafted onto seedling rootstock. Quince seedlings are still widely used as root stocks for grafting pears and other fruits, giving properties of dwarfness and heavy soil tolerance to the union.

I can only say that, like other writers, I am an unabashed advocate of the quince, and have several seedlings edging skyward as I type this. Perhaps they will be my small contribution to some future garden history...

Stuart Read trained as a nurseryman, horticulturist and landscape architect in New Zealand, coming to Australia in 1990. Working for Environment Australia on Australia's National Estate and World Heritage places, he also designs in Canberra and finds it difficult to avoid opening his mouth and so gets into trouble in a growing number of places!

#### FAMILY: ROSACEAE

- Deciduous with lovely autumn foliage
- Grows to 6 metres with broadly spreading canopy
- Flowers in spring – large single perfumed pale pink or white five petalled blossom
- Fruit yellow to 10cm – very fragrant – downy apple or pear shaped
- Native to Eastern Europe and Western Asia
- Hardy



## THE ART OF GARDENING

by TREVOR NOTTLE

What a rich vein to work, if only there were a greater supply of books about the subject, especially any that might be about the art of gardening in Australia. Regrettably such books seem in scarce supply, in fact short of being boastful there seems to be almost none at the moment. That is too bad, for such books (in the plural) are needed to advance our gardening into the 21st century.

Looking further afield, as we habitually do, there are still few books that excite the imagination with good reading and interesting ideas. Three small books, lately arrived from a small UK publisher, have stirred my fancy.

They are very slender volumes written by the sculptor Ian Hamilton-Finlay for the *New Arcadians' Journal* about his garden, 'Little Sparta', in Strathclyde, Scotland. A long way from Australia admittedly but such a saga, and so thorough a war record – including official war art – that the trilogy is a powerful statement about the subversive art of gardening. The war referred to is a war between local government bureaucrats and the sculptor-garden maker. This may seem an off-beat approach to the subject but the conflict serves as a set of opposing ideas which the artist-gardener challenges, stretches, teases and reacts against, producing in the end a garden which has a thoroughly developed rationale as well as a stylish, individual and artistic presence. The garden at 'Little Sparta' has more than just a physical existence; it exists as a set of linked ideas – quite unusual ones at that – which hark back to the political basis of 18th century gardens such as Stowe and Hough Hole House in Cheshire. And it exists as a sequence of sculptures that stand independently as works of art, but more importantly constitute, with the garden, the totality of the artist's vision. Should this sound pretty heavy going look up 'Little Sparta' in Roger Phillips' *A Photographic Garden History* for ample evidence that the garden, as a garden, is delightful and thoroughly modern. The three books which develop the vision and expound the rationale are *Gardens of Exile*; *Liberty, Terror and Virtue – the Little Spartan War and the Third Reich Revisited* and *Despatches from the Little Spartan War* – all published in limited editions by the New Arcadians' Press.

Miles away, physically, chronologically and artistically are the gardens of southern California. Unlike Ian Hamilton-Finlay's garden many of these look back to sources outside their own environment, yet there have been attempts at several stages in California's history to develop gardens (and architecture) that sit well with the warm, dry climate that predominates there. One of the classic books in this vein is Winifred Starr-Dobyns' book, *California Gardens*, first published in 1931. Now re-issued by Allen Knoll with a new introduction by Carol Greentree, this fine photographic essay reveals the strength and vision of garden designers working in California at a time when money and lifestyle enabled a brave and beautiful group of gardens to be developed by courageous patrons and imaginative, sensitive garden designers. It happens that many of the gardens illus-

trated in black and white now no longer exist, or are much altered by subdivision and want of care but, none the less, the vision remains fresh and challenging to those who hanker after *English Flower Gardens*. Comparing the original edition with the new seems rather pointless as the former is so hard to obtain while the second is an estimable publication. Carol Greentree's introductory essay sets the scene for those unfamiliar with the California land boom of the 1920s and '30s. Millionaires, moguls and movie stars, maybe even mobsters, vied with each other through their architects and landscape architects to create estates that were magnificent and responsive to the sunny climate. In a reaction to the Tudor, Renaissance and French splendours being built on the eastern seaboard, the garden designers of California looked to other established models for their inspiration. Considering the climate and history of the Golden State, it is not surprising that the great gardens of Italy and Spain were the watershed for their ideas. Winifred Starr-Dobyns, herself the wife of a politician and a community leader, collected a series of photographs that illustrated the garden style of the new Eden that was developing around her in Pasadena, Montecito, San Mateo, San Marino and other smart neighbourhoods of southern California. While the magnificent water chain built for film-star Harold Lloyd (derived from the water chain at Villa Lante) would not be practicable in most of today's gardens, there are many smaller design ideas which would appeal to readers of *Australian Garden History*. As a source book, *California Gardens* will exert some influence now that Mediterranean garden styles are resurgent, and as an historical record of the gardens of California it is the centrepiece essential to understanding how the garden as a 20th Century vision of Eden developed there.

There have been more recent publications which have dealt with the same theme, though the garden focus has been replaced with a similar one based more 'holistically' on lifestyle. *Casa California* is a photographic exploration of the idea of California lifestyle that developed out of the vision of Eden sold to wealthy (and cold) Easterners in the 1920s and '30s. With a sure sense of style, artisans and members of the film colony, and eventually the thousands of emigrants who flocked to the Land of Promise, developed houses and gardens that assumed a degree of integration unknown elsewhere in domestic American culture. Indoor-outdoor living year round in a comfortable, relaxed setting is the hallmark of California style that developed from these first essays. The interiors and exteriors are a fascinating blend of Spanish, Mexican, Moroccan and Moorish themes that even in the pared down Mexican Modern 'Greenburg House' (1991) show that the style is still developing and capable of offering fresh ideas on the now well-known pattern. Courtyards, patios, portals, *placitas*, *acequias*, *soubras*, *bancos*, *nichos*, *fogons* and *ramadas* all add new dimensions to our thinking about what can be done in a garden with ideas that begin in the house. The Spanish-Mexican terminology may not all find its way into our own language but the ideas certainly bear consideration if we are to make better use of our gardens as living spaces. The book is a coffee-table style book without doubt, yet it recommends itself on the strength of the ideas it illustrates with



abundant colour photographs. One particularly interesting idea, hardly used at all in Australia since the earliest times of European settlement, is the swept earth surface as a garden feature. As it is shown in this book, the idea is one which can be quietly attractive. Another allied idea hardly seen at all is the way in which fine pea gravel is used as a swept, or raked mulch to reduce water loss and foster plant growth. That it is also an effective foil to the form and foliage of decorative plants is immediately apparent from the illustrations. These are but minor sidelines in a book about decoration but there is sufficient coverage of gardens to make the book of interest from that perspective. I would like to have looked also at *Montecito – California's Garden Paradise*, a book which promised to elaborate more on the California dream from a gardens perspective. However, it disappeared from my bookseller's shelves before I could obtain a copy and is now reported to be out of print. Ah, well, everyone has a story to tell about the one that got away.

Now we come to a completely different aspect of the Art of Gardening. It is the idea of common place things of the garden organised as art. I refer to *Garden Tools*, a book which has no practical value whatever for down to earth gardeners and yet which is in itself a unique contribution to gardening literature. It is a book which is about collecting and displaying old garden tools. I suspect it will not be the last nostalgia book about garden equipment and tools, but as the first it has some claim to our attention, and as it happens, is beautifully designed and produced. More than that, for garden historians, it offers much visual interest and an important point of reference. Illustrated are hundreds of designs for garden implements from scateurs and watering cans to fruit pickers and blueberry combs. It is a fascinating exposé. What began as an exercise in almost pure coffee-table publishing has become an appealing and useful reference for gardeners. It has counterparts in 'trendsetting style books' about wire, glass, rustic furniture and kitchen ceramics. The range of equipment depicted is not merely large, it is also very comprehensive, illustrating how necessity has inspired many creative solutions to the same problem. If, like me, you pass over the book the first time you see it, do

not be surprised if it comes back to mind; its images are strangely compelling; serried rows of asparagus knives, syringes and pruning saws work their own magic on memory; rhubarb forcing pots, bell cloches and evocative old posters spin their own charmed web. It is well worth a second look and will reward readers with insights into the 'whys' and 'wherefores' of simple horticultural technology in the days before mass production.

#### *Garden tools*

by Suzanne Slesin, Guillaume Pellerin, Stafford Cliff, Daniel Rozensztroch, Bernard Touillon and Alix de Dives

Published by Abbeyville Press, New York, 1996

(available through Peribo Books, Sydney)

RRP \$55.00

#### *Casa California*

by Elizabeth McMillan and Melba Levick

Published by Rizzoli, New York, 1996

(available through Bookwise International Adelaide)

RRP \$75.00

#### *California gardens*

by Winifred Starr-Dobyns

Published by Allan A. Knoll, Santa Barbara, 1996

(reprint of Macmillan, 1931 edition)

RRP \$80.00

#### *Gardens of exile*

*Liberty, terror and virtue – The Little Spartan War and the Third Reich Revisited*

*Dispatches from the little Spartan war*

by Ian Hamilton-Finlay

Published by New Arcadians' Journal (UK)

Inquiries to: Mr Patrick Eyres, 13 Graham Grove, Leeds, LS4 2NE, England.

Trevor Nottle is jetsetting in warmer climes for twelve weeks, delivering papers at the International Heritage Rose Conference in Cambridge, the Mediterranean Garden Society in Athens and Majorca and talks in Italy and Paris. Despite such hardships, he is sure to find time to source more unusual titles to fill his bookshelves with.

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by RICHARD AITKEN

## JANE AUSTEN AND THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE

by Mavis Batey

Published by Barn Elms Publishing, London, 1996,  
135pp, distributed in Australia by Florilegium  
RRP \$39.95

## REGENCY GARDENS

by Mavis Batey

Shire Publications Ltd, Princes Risborough,  
Buckinghamshire, 1997, 96pp  
RRP about \$13

This pair of books from the doyenne of British garden historians provides a rare feast. Some readers will be familiar with Mavis Batey and her writings in *Garden History* (journal of our British counterpart, the Garden History Society). Her article 'The Picturesque: an overview' (*Garden History*, 22:2, Winter 1994) is a masterly summary of the events of 1794 and more recently her 75th birthday has been celebrated by a special issue of *Garden History* (24:1, Summer 1996) with essays in her honour. The two books under consideration here are alike in subject matter but given very different treatment physically and intellectually.

The most glamorous of the pair is *Jane Austen and the English Landscape*. Far from riding on the coat tails of the filmic Austen revival, Batey has been researching this subject for many years and her book sets the Austen novels in chronological context linking the action (if Austen's prose could be described thus) with contemporary trends in landscape gardening (with an array of splendid illustrations). Thus we learn about Gilpin and the beginnings of the Picturesque in her discussion of *Pride and Prejudice* before moving to Humphry Repton and *Mansfield Park* and ending with her unfinished novel *Sanditon* as a prelude to a discussion of the Regency phenomenon (especially as it was manifest at Brighton), a theme taken up in far greater detail in *Regency Gardens*. This approach provides much for both garden historians and Austenophants alike, but a previous familiarity with the novels would be of assistance when digesting this rich fare.

The second book, *Regency Gardens*, is a far slimmer volume, but on the whole I felt perhaps a more satisfying book. Although *Jane Austen* takes an inventive interdisciplinary view of the period, the basic theme is Austen and how her books were informed by the period. *Regency Gardens* on the other hand, is intended for those with a greater interest in gardens (being part of the excellent 'Shire Garden History' series) and also fairly bristles with ideas. The early 19th century – a period of great interest for an Australian audience – is rarely treated with such a knowledgeable approach and each chapter brings a host of new ideas and linkages.

What parallels can be drawn between Britain and Australia in the Regency period? As a British colony, the royal crisis (George III's recurring bouts of mental illness and the installation of George IV as his Regent) was not unknown to a colonial audience. George IV's love of Brighton, where he spent princely sums creating the Brighton Pavilion in the relaxed seaside atmosphere, has resonances for the colonial situation,

relaxed through distance from central government if not wealth. Fashionable society followed the Prince Regent, and striped verandahs, balconies and touches of rusticity became architectural hallmarks of the Regency style. Marine villas were well suited to the this style and the coastal nature of Australia's early European settlement saw a fortuitous chronological link between contemporary British fashion and availability of freehold water frontage. The rise of the *cottage orné* during the Regency period, whereby distasteful aspects of the lower class cottage were conveniently removed and appealing aspects were appropriated (such as a linking of house and garden, often via a verandah and French doors) turned a humble shelter into an informal upper middle class pavilion. The necessity for portable or temporary buildings in the colonies (e.g. La Trobe's Cottage in Melbourne) lent itself to the casual cottage idiom of the Regency style; the Royal representative living in prefabricated cottage was surely the ultimate in informality. Verandah'd houses featured prominently in Westall & Gendall's, *Views of Country Seats* (Ackermann, London, 1830), from which Batey draws heavily. These two volumes, with their evocative aquatint plates, are still held in the library at Woolmers (Tasmania), doubtless purchased by William Archer (son of Thomas Archer, founder of the Woolmers dynasty) during his period of architectural study in London in the 1830s, thus providing evidence of direct transmission of Regency ideas to the antipodes.

The introduction of the ornamental flower garden around the residence and the use of ornamental shrubbery were landscaping hallmarks of Regency gardens and views of Highfield (Tasmania) are the quintessence of Regency style (e.g. see the cover of Tanner, *Converting the Wilderness*, 1980). Strictly speaking, in Australia the term Regency could only really be applied to New South Wales and Tasmania, and perhaps the Swan River and South Australia, but may in a lingering form apply to gardens in Victoria and elsewhere. Consider La Trobe's Cottage (especially as depicted in the sketches by Edward La Trobe Bateman or the view in Watts, *Historic Gardens of Victoria*, 1983, p.20), or the view from a balcony in East Melbourne (which adorns an AGHS card, see Watts, p.90), this latter garden depicted through a leafy verandah, a mode of illustration popularised by Repton. Here the Regency interest in flower gardens and ornamental shrubbery is combined with relaxed outdoor living in a manner which is periodically raised as a hallmark of a 'distinctively Australian style'.

Batey sees A.J. Downing as taking 'Regency gardening' to America through his book *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America* (1841). From evidence available in Australia, the ideas in Mavis Batey's book allow us to usefully link a mode of landscape and architectural expression in the Regency period in Britain to the period in Australia prior to the economic and social upheavals of the gold rushes on the 1850s. Henceforth, the tendency to leap from the great 18th century landscaped gardens to the gardenesque of the mid 19th century should be firmly resisted.

These are both significant new books and it is difficult to choose between the two. My suggestion is to get both: *Jane Austen and the English Landscape* for its superb illustrations and innovative conceptual framework, and *Regency Gardens* for its greater depth of information and resonances with the antipodean scene.



# POSTCARD FROM WALES

HELEN PAGE continues her travels through Wales,  
observing historic garden surveying and recording.

Following my time at the University of York, I have been fortunate to spend two weeks in Wales observing how historic garden surveying and recording is carried out. Elisabeth Whittle, a garden historian, works for Cadw Welsh Historic Monuments, and is also co-editor of *Garden History*, the Journal of the Garden History Society. In Elisabeth's role with Cadw she is responsible for the preparation of the *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales*. This is being carried out on a county by county basis. Elisabeth has completed the Registers for both Gwent and Clywd, is well underway with Glamorgan, and is overseeing contract garden historians who are carrying out the required work for the remaining three counties.

The Register is advisory only and has no statutory powers. The aim in producing it is to provide information on historic parks and gardens to aid their protection and conservation. It is hoped that this information will help owners, local planning authorities, developers, statutory bodies, and all who are concerned with this part of the national heritage, to make informed decisions about sites on the Register. The Register will be kept up-to-date with additions, amendments and deletions made from time to time.

Wales has a wealth of significant gardens, unfortunately overshadowed often by the gardens of England. Sadly, some of these gardens are now neglected and so it is of vital importance that they are recorded before any further degradation takes place. There are examples of all gardening styles in Wales, ranging from garden and park remnants dating back to early medieval times through to the 20th century, including Edwardian and Arts and Crafts styles.

The entry for each site on the Register includes:

- a site plan indicating the area of the garden and its component parts, important vistas and the garden's essential setting;
- a site description, including a summary of its history;
- lists of primary and secondary source material.

This information is supported by a comprehensive dossier held in the Cadw office containing information gathered from site visits, current photography, archive searches, early maps and plans and discussions with owners and other people with knowledge of the site.

I have accompanied Elisabeth on several site visits in Glamorgan where we have walked over extensive areas of parks, pleasure grounds and kitchen gardens. These visits have confirmed the importance of the Register in my mind. Some of my observations follow.

Margam comprises ruins of a 12th century abbey, a 17th century orangery, flanked by a 19th century terrace garden and a Victorian mansion, together with the remnants of its parterre garden, pleasure grounds and park. The property is now owned by the local authority and it is hoped that by its inclusion on the register the site will be developed with respect to its multi-layered history.

Wenvoe is now the site of a golf course and, apart from one small section now used as the club house, the grand 18th century house has been lost. Unfortunately tree planting

carried out around the golf course over the last fifty years is totally insensitive to the site and provides an example of recent mistakes that hopefully will be prevented in the future when the Register is used as part of the planning and development process. We were excited to find the grotto and stone walling which enclosed the serpentine waterway central to the pleasure grounds. Hopefully respect of this area by the golf club can be encouraged and, as it falls out of the playing area, some form of 'preservation as is' can be implemented.

Penllergare on the outskirts of Swansea has been a magnificent estate but is now threatened by housing development encroaching onto it. The ruins of the kitchen garden, now overgrown with ivy and seedling trees, are fascinating. The orchid house, built in 1843, was outstanding in its time. Its creator attempted to create a tropical landscape, based on the Essequibo rapids, where one of the orchids he wanted to grow had been discovered. Sadly all that remains is an untidy and overgrown jumble of stone. It is unrealistic to think that all this could be restored, but it would be wonderful if there could be some negotiation with the developers and that a small part could be restored and used as a feature in the housing development along with some interpretative signage providing a brief history of the site.

Within the pleasure grounds of Penllergare is an outstanding waterfall set within a deep gully. In the 19th century, this gully was extensively landscaped with walking paths winding through groves of rhododendrons and introduced American conifers. Much of this planting remains, although the paths are rarely definable. Restoration work has been carried out recently by the developers on the waterfall and lake and it is hoped they intend to make these a feature of the area.

We visited St Fagan's Castle, part of the Welsh Museum of Country Life. The extensive compartmentalised gardens have an interesting history and are well maintained and are well worth a visit, as are the gardens of Dyffryn, a little known treasure by Thomas Mawson. We went to St Fagan's armed with the 1873 plans for the water garden designed by the noted rock and water garden designer of the time, James Pulham. It was fascinating to see these detailed plans on paper surviving to this date on the ground.

In Swansea we met with staff from the Swansea Botanic Gardens on the site of the 19th century gardens of Singleton Abbey, gardened extensively by generations of the original owners. I was proudly shown here their collection of 21 eucalypts and their glasshouse collection of Australian plants. They are wishing to increase the educational component of their work and discussed their plans with us.

Another interesting day was spent in discussion with the vice chairman of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust. This is made up of branches from each county and relies heavily on voluntary support from its members. Groups such as these are vital to provide support for gardens and to act as watchdogs within the community. It could be valuable for us to set up some lines of interchange of information with bodies such as the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust.



Ashley Dawson-Damer reports on an extra-ordinary  
'Fairie Nielsen' tour of Tasmanian gardens.

On Tuesday 25 February, 42 members of the Australian Garden History Society gathered in Tasmania to begin a tour of gardens under the aegis of Fairie Nielsen. Staying in the cosy Balmoral Inn in Launceston we spent five wonderful days visiting the environs. We were not long into the tour before it was borne in on us that this was no ordinary tour nor Fairie an ordinary tour leader. By the end of Day 1 we had become Fairie's charges and the owners of the gardens were Fairie's friends, many having served on her AGHS committee.



WENDY QUINN

Susie Rothwell 'en tour'

Wherever we went we were welcomed with an affection that is only given to privileged guests. Some measure of the hospitality shown us was simply Tasmanian charm but the greater part can only result from the enormous affection and respect in which Fairie is held by them all. Fairie bossed us, cajoled us and took care of us. A list of Launceston restaurants were handed out on the first day and block bookings were made. On the first night, a small independent group of us went in search of the restaurant Fe and Me in Charles Street – and became lost. Susan Rothwell, one of our party and a Taswegian by birth, admitted to a hopeless sense of direction and could not help. We were finally orienteered to Charles Street by Annie Norris where we wan-

dered up and down in freezing arctic winds searching for our restaurant. Chilled and not a little desperate we finally fell into the portals of Fe and Me and were treated to a delicious dinner. The moral of the story was never to travel too far from Fairie's skirts!



MAREAH RHODES-WHITE

Pam Jellie, Nan Pfahl and Margie Herbert.

By Day 3, our appetites at night had begun to wane for during the day not only did we reel from one glorious garden to another but from one mini banquet to the next. People were heard to say in failing accents, as they reached for another delicious slice of cake, 'We must eat or we will hurt their feelings'. Fairie would say (over the microphone) after we had driven away, 'I told them not to go to too much bother, that you would only want a scone'. It was also on Day 3 at 7pm when Philip our driver, wearily but deftly turned the coach into the now familiar and seemingly endless Charles Street which heralded home, that Annie Norris was heard to murmur, 'I always seem to be in Charles Street', and Susan Rothwell replied, 'They're all Charles Street to me'.



WENDY QUINN

Sally Darling thanking Fairie Nielsen.

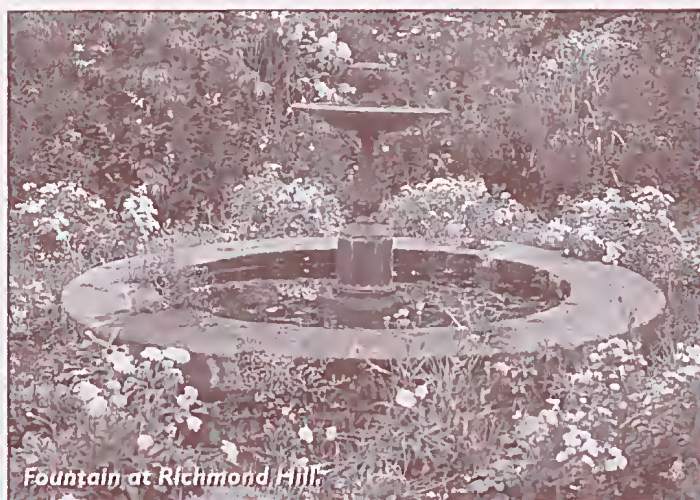


SUE COURTIS

Fairie's troupe at Symonds Plains.

There are images we carry away with us of the people we met and the gardens we saw. I remember afternoon tea in Sally Rigney's garden where the solid handiwork of her





Fountain at Richmond Hill

dry stone walling stood in stark contrast to the delicate lightness of her layer chocolate cakes; and another banquet lunch in Vera Taylor's garden on the lawn, where she talked so movingly of her family's history, the building of house and garden over generations. I remember meeting Jo Johnson, the clever custodian of a glorious family garden; and lunch at The Glen, which is a treasure of a new garden planted to supply Prue Green with material for her talented flower arrangements and where we were served a tortilla that kept the secret of its ingredients while it excited our taste buds. Visiting venerable Connorville where we walked in a vast private garden uniquely surrounded by a moat; and morning tea with a young supermum, Sophie Ranicar, who manages to study horticulture and renovate her home while developing and caring for the famous garden which she inherited from her mother-in-law and bringing up two adorable little girls. It was in Sophie's garden that we heard of the famous and rare Mrs Ranicar's hellebore and some of the clever members quickly purchased all available stock



Margaret Cook in the Dunedin garden

from Pam Hutchens when we visited her nursery, Richmond Hill. We will never forget the two gems of gardens beside the Tamar River where some of us were treated to a feast of figs and plums and mulberries by Peter Grant in his magnificent vegetable garden; nor will we forget the kindness of Pixie at Bowthorpe. I enjoyed my talk on tomatoes with Jim Taylor and how kind it was of him to escort us on our walk to Strathmore where we had lunch. Strathmore will remain

in all our memories for the beauty of its small hotel and the hospitality of its proprietors, Sue and Graham Gillon and their courageous son.

But most of all we will remember Fairie with her wonderful stories and her unique expressions. Passing a B & B near Westbury called The Willows, Fairie said 'When I was a girl it was called the Doctors House and the Doctor lived there. He would deliver you and sometimes bury you. Eventually he bought a car and one of his three daughters would drive it. When his two eldest daughters had married he removed his youngest daughter from school to drive him.'

Fairie admires courage in hardship and hard-working women. Before our arrival at Symmons Plains on Day 4, Fairie told us it had a fantastic oak drive which was reputed to have the widest span in Australia. 'I spoke to Shirley Youl one day', she confided to us 'and she said she was tired, she had just raked up all the acorns. Of course she was tired because before she can mow the lawns she has to rake up the leaves after she has raked up the acorns!'

Our visit to Culzean on Day 2 was a unique experience because this was once the home of Fairie's grandmother. 'I spent a large part of my childhood here with my cousins', she told us. 'We had no education but were great readers. When we finally went to school we had never heard of maths, and I still won't use a calculator, I don't trust them.' Fairie's cousin, Prue Davies, was also on the tour with us, so



Ashley Dawson-Damer with Annie Norris and Fairie Nielsen

we all returned to the magical time of their childhood. Fairie related how she and Prue were sent to pick the mulberries which were used for wine making.

It was on the morning of our final day we received our greatest accolade from Fairie. 'Shirley Youl said yesterday that you were the nicest group of people to ever visit her garden – but don't let it go to your head, we have the rest of the day to go!'

At tour's end, and in the words of Fairie herself, 'I tip my lid to you' and expect Fairie will reply as she did to Sally Darling's speech of thanks, 'I never heard such a load of codswallop in my life!'

Ashley Dawson-Damer is a garden writer who is restoring the gardens surrounding their 1838 colonial Georgian home, Oran Park, south of Sydney. She is passionate about her large collection of heritage roses and extensive vegetable garden.



# NATIONAL AND BRANCH NEWS

## INDEX

Kirstie McRobert has undertaken the painstaking task of indexing five years of *Australian Garden History* and the *Index to Volumes 3-7 (1991-1996)* is now available from the AGHS Office. Cost \$10.00 including postage. Our thanks to Kirstie for undertaking this exacting task. There are also copies still available of *Index to Volumes 1 & 2* and copies of back issues of *Australian Garden History*.

## MARION BLACKWELL TRIP

A private camping trip to the Kimberley and Bungles will be led by Marion Blackwell. The 21 day trip departs from Perth on Sunday 29 June and finishes in Broome on Saturday 19 July. Contact Sue Keon-Cohen (03) 5944 3971 or Sue Campbell (03) 5726 5225

## AGM

The 1997 AGM will be held in Sydney on Friday 10 October following a cocktail party at the Dawson-Damer garden in Rose Bay Avenue, Bellevue Hill. Further details next issue.

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Following the resounding success of the 1997 National Conference held in Canberra over the Anzac Weekend, plans are already underway for the 1998 Conference in Western Australia from 16-18 October.

A full report of the Canberra Conference, Pre Conference Tour together with photographs will be included in the next issue of *Australian Garden History*. Conference Proceedings can be ordered from the AGHS office for \$10.00.

## GARDEN LECTURE SERIES

The Australian Garden History Society is this year supporting the Garden Lecture Series with two lectures by internationally recognised garden identities. The first is on Tuesday 28 October in Melbourne entitled the Golden Age of Gardening and The New Kitchen Garden by Anna Pavord. This will be held at St Leonards College in Brighton. Anna Pavord is associate editor of *Gardens Illustrated* and is author of two books, *The Border Book* and *The New Kitchen Garden*. Within the National Trust, Anna Pavord is a member of the influential Garden Advisory Panel.

Sunday 16 November is the other date to put in your diaries with a lecture at Holbrook and garden day at Woomargama in southern NSW. Chairman of the AGHS, Margaret Darling will be opening her garden, Woomargama Station in conjunction with a lecture by Anne Longden, a floral demonstration, lunch and visit to Ann Snow's Dunraven garden. Anne Longden is a floral artist who has been organising magnificent floral arrangements for gala occasions at Covent Garden and the Royal Opera House in London for years. There have also been several Royal commissions as well as major events at Sothebys and Christies.

Another international lecturer visiting Australia as part of the Garden Lecture Series is Stephen Lacey in September. For details contact Joan Arnold (048) 612 942 or Barbara Dalitz (03) 9592 0825.

## ASSISTANCE WITH JOURNAL PACKING

Thanks to Georgina Whitehead, Liz Kerr, Di Ellerton, John Joyce, Marika Kiocsis, Margaret Darling, Pam Jellie, Rosemary Manion, Gwen Ward, Beryl Black and Jackie Courmadias for packing the last issue of *Australian Garden History*.

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The Society is affiliated with the Australian Council of National Trusts and is thereby able to benefit from Trusts' tax deductible status.

\*Donations are welcome and should be made payable to the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) and forwarded to the AGHS.

Membership benefits: *Australian Garden History*, the Society's official journal, six times a year; garden related seminars; lectures, garden visits and special-interest tours; opportunity to attend annual conference and conference tour; contributing to the preservation of historic gardens for prosperity.

AGHS Office, Royal Botanic Gardens, Birdwood Ave, South Yarra, Vic. 3141 Ph/Fax (03) 9650 5043 Toll Free 1800 67 8446

THIS FORM CAN BE PHOTOCOPIED SO THAT THE JOURNAL CAN BE RETAINED INTACT.



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## MAY

**SUNDAY 4 NSW Central Coast** – Gardens visit. Morning tea at Garrawin, Mangrove Mountain, settled in 1914 and developed by three generations of the Madsen family. Lunch at Paradise Gardens, a thirty acre camellia garden and wholesale nursery at Kulnura. Food stalls on site or BYO lunch. **Cost** \$10.00 members and friends. **Time** 10.30am. **Bookings** (02) 9428 5947 or (02) 9328 6800. Pre-payment essential for map and directions.

## JUNE

**MONDAY 2 Victoria Melbourne** – 'Should gardens speak for themselves?' Historic gardens interpretation in the UK, Europe and USA by garden historian Karen Olsen. **Time** 8-9.45pm **Venue** McInerney Lecture Theatre, Deakin University, Stonnington Toorak Campus, 336 Glenferrie Road, Malvern. **Enquiries/bookings** (03) 9650 5043.

**TUESDAY 24 NSW Sydney** – Flora Treasures, Australian and International, from the Rare Books Section of the State Library. An illustrated talk by John Murphy, curator of 'Possessed' Great Treasures of the State Library and a view of the exhibition. Co-hosted by AGHS and The Library Society of NSW in The Gallery, Mitchell Wing, State Library. **Time** 5.30pm. **Cost** \$10.00 members, \$15.00 non-members. **Enquiries/bookings** (02) 9428 5947.

## JULY

**MONDAY 7 Victoria Melbourne** – Garden historian Anne Neale explores the work of 19th century Victorian visionary, Eduard Latrobe Bateman. **Time** 8-9.45pm **Venue** McInerney Lecture Theatre, Deakin University, Stonnington Toorak Campus, 336 Glenferrie Road, Malvern. **Enquiries/bookings** (03) 9650 5043.

**MONDAY 14 SA** – Combined meeting with the Friends of the Waite Arboretum. Darrell Kraehenbuhl will speak on the original vegetation of the Adelaide Plains. **Venue** Urrbrae House at the Waite Institute, Urrbrae. **Time** 8pm.

**SUNDAY 27 NSW Southern Highlands** – AGM with afternoon tea. **Venue** Links House, 17 Links Road, Bowral. **Time** 3pm. No charge. **Enquiries** (048) 352205 or (02) 9929 5775.

## AUGUST

**MONDAY 4 Victoria Melbourne** – 'A Vision of Nature: Landscapes of the Eltham Muddies' talk by Rob Boyle with special guest Gordon Ford.

**FRIDAY 8 SA Adelaide** – AGM St Mark's College, North Adelaide with guest speaker Tony Whitehill.

**SUNDAY 10 NSW Southern Highlands** – Winter Lecture by Judith Baskin, librarian turned garden writer and heritage consultant, at The Briars, Moss Vale Road, Bowral followed by a visit to Whitley at Sutton Forest. **Time** 11am. **Bookings** (048) 683 581.

## OCTOBER

**FRIDAY 10 NSW Sydney** – AGM following cocktail party at the Dawson-Damer garden in Rose Bay Avenue, Bellevue Hill.



Woomargama Station will be open as part of the Garden Lecture Series on Sunday 16 November.

**SUNDAY 12 NSW Southern Highlands** – Visit to the Old Rectory, Berrima, owned by Maxine Stewart. This large garden is believed to be the original Paul Sorensen nursery and includes a peony farm. **Enquiries** (048) 683 581 or (02) 9398 8117.

**MONDAY 25-SATURDAY 30 SA Flinders Ranges** – Six-day tour to Wilpena Pound, Arkaroola, Brachina Gorge, Old Anlaby, Bungaree Station and the Clare Valley with naturalist Neville Bonney. **Enquiries** (03) 9650 5043.

**TUESDAY 28 Victoria Melbourne** – Garden Lecture Series with Anna Pavord at St Leonards College, Brighton. **Bookings/Enquiries** (048) 612 942 or (03) 9592 0825.

## NOVEMBER

**SUNDAY 2 NSW Southern Highlands** – Open day at Hillview, Illawarra Highway, Sutton Forest, former country residence of Governors of NSW. This is an opportunity to visit Hillview on your way to the pre-conference tour. **Venue** Hillview, Illawarra Highway, Sutton Forest. **Time** 10 am-4 pm. **Cost** Non-members \$4. **Enquiries** Trish Goodman (048) 683 581.

**FRIDAY 14 ACT** – Twilight rose ramble in Forrest concluding with drinks in Berger garden.

**SUNDAY 16 Southern NSW** – Garden Lecture Series with floral artist Anne Longden at Holbrook, lunch and garden visits to Woomargama Station and Dunraven at Woomargama. **Bookings/Enquiries** (048) 612 942 or (03) 9592 0825.

## 1998: OCTOBER

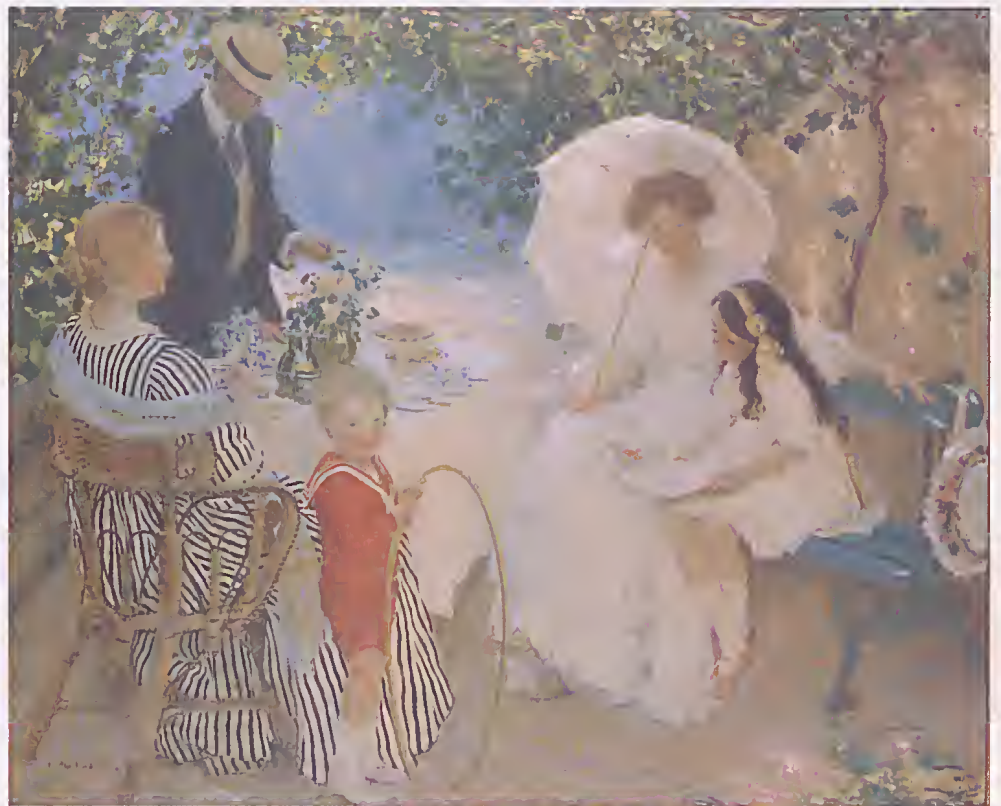
**FRIDAY 16-SUNDAY 18 WA** – National Conference in Fremantle.



E. Phillips Fox 1865-1915 Australia, *The Arbour* 1910, oil on canvas, 190.5 x 230.7 cm. Felton Bequest, 1916, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

## The 'lady' in the arbour

Como historian, Adrea Fox, unveils the story behind E. Phillip Fox's famous painting, 'The Arbour'...



When I was a little girl I loved doing jigsaw puzzles; perhaps that is why I became an historian. Finding the pieces, putting them together and creating the picture of past lives and events is a fascinating journey. A few weeks ago a telephone call from Trisha Dixon about Dyce-Murphy pointed towards some interesting links with Como. Trisha's call reminded me of another call I had earlier this year from a lady in Sydney about the same man. Between the two telephone calls and some research at Como, I could place the start of this remarkable man's life into one of the spaces in Como's history.

Herbert Dyce-Murphy was born on 18 October 1879 at Como, South Yarra, Melbourne. His mother, Ada Maude Florence Murphy (née Hopkins) was the niece of Charles Armytage. The Armytage family occupied Como for over 95 years from 1864 until 1959. During the period 1876 (the year of Charles Armytage's death) to 1880, Como was used as a town house for visiting relatives. Caroline Armytage, Charles wife, had taken their nine children and servants on an extended four year world tour. It was during this time, while the Murphy family were on holidays at Como, that Dyce-Murphy arrived into the world earlier than expected.

Murphy was described by Stephen Murray-Smith as a gentleman adventurer and raconteur, an amazing man, who had made three arctic voyages as a schoolboy in the yacht Gladstone. One of the most fascinating aspects of Dyce-Murphy's life was the years he lived as a woman. Murphy was commissioned by the Director General of Military Intelligence to spy in France and Belgium. Murphy was chosen after performing a female role in a Greek play at Oxford. For many years he lived under the name of 'Edith Murphy'. He continued the guise, sharing a house in Kew, England with a

retired ship's master who bequeathed him a large estate.

In 1908, Murphy volunteered for Ernest Shackleton's Antarctic expedition. Shackleton refused to take Dyce-Murphy, apparently because of his feminine disposition. However, Shackleton did take Bertram Armytage, Dyce-Murphy's cousin, who received the Royal Geographical Society's Antarctic Medal from King George V: Bertram's medal still sits in the Billiard room at Como today.

According to oral histories recorded with Stephen Murray-Smith, during the amazing adventures and fantastic, yet often-verified stories, Dyce-Murphy claimed to be the auburn-haired woman with the white parasol in Phillips Fox's painting, *The Arbour*. The sketches for *The Arbour* are found in Fox's second sketch book commencing in January 1905. Fox made a large number of pencil and charcoal studies for *The Arbour*, focusing on the lady with the parasol. Ruth Zuban's book on E. Phillips Fox describes *The Arbour*, although different in style, as influenced by the works of Renoir and Monet. One of Fox's three *déjeuner* paintings, *The Arbour* was more posed and tableaux like – 'the most decorative of the three'.

*The Arbour* was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1910. If Dyce-Murphy was the model for *The Arbour*, Fox never realised that 'Edith' was really 'Herbert'.

Adrea Fox is the historian for Como Historic House and Garden, a Victorian National Trust property. After teaching Music and Drama for many years, she started a new career in 1988 as the Historian and Co-ordinator of the Benga Oral History Museum. After completing an Honours History Degree at Melbourne University, she worked as a consultant historian for the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) on Dows' Pharmacy, Chiltern and oral history projects. Her latest publication is a social history of Como called *The Story of Como*.